

**South Downtown Advisory Group
Draft Notes from Meeting #4, August 10, 2005**

OVERALL SUMMARY:

- The advisors' input suggests it makes sense to get out in front of development by doing street master planning that would clearly define required streetscape treatments.
- The advisors' input confirmed the importance of several streets already identified by neighborhood plans, including: Jackson, King, Maynard, Main, Fifth Avenue S., Occidental Avenue, certain alleys, and the King Street Station vicinity.
- Other newly identified streets with urban design potential include: Second Ave. S., Washington and Main Streets, new streets in the Stadium North Lot, Royal Brougham and connections through the south-of-Dearborn area.
- Bicyclist and pedestrian safety concerns were noted on busy streets such as Fourth Avenue S. and Dearborn. Flashing-light sidewalks are favored at high volume locations.
- Streetcar extension up Jackson, boulevard treatment of Jackson, and possible re-route of the streetcar in Pioneer Square are of interest to the advisors.

BACKGROUND ON NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN THEMES

Susan McLain provided a brief overview of Pioneer Square and Chinatown/I.D. Neighborhood Plan themes. Each has interest in improving key public parks and open spaces, streetscape character, and public safety, particularly along certain corridors. Managing existing parks and seeking new park/open space resources were also themes of common interest. Susan also noted the Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center's interests in maintaining industrial uses, and the pedestrian-oriented interests discussed in the Stadium Area Overlay.

Tom Im, advisory group member, explained the Streetscape and Open Space Master Plan (2003) prepared by representatives of the entire Chinatown/I.D. community. It includes interest in:

- improving corridors including Jackson, King, Maynard and Main Street, with special treatments that would be amenities, connections and attractions for pedestrians to use and reach other community amenities such as the Danny Woo Gardens.
- sustainability principles are being incorporated with aspects addressing rainwater harvesting and ecological stewardship.
- Tom also noted interests in: Jackson Street as an improved boulevard; additional open space to serve special populations in the neighborhood; need for increased lighting, art and maintenance in the area; a freeway noise issue at the Danny Woo Gardens; and the importance of programming parks with activating features and events.

SEATTLE DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION (SDOT) OVERVIEW

Barbara Gray and Dawn Schellenberg of SDOT summarized relevant plans and projects affecting the broad area. Plans cited include the recently adopted Transportation Strategic Plan, a SODO corridor study (addressing now, 2010, 2030, to be completed in early 2006), a Jackson Street Streetcar Study, a new Transit Plan, Downtown bicycle planning, and Right of Way Improvement Manual (which will match street design prescriptions with adjacent land uses). Major projects include: light rail, additional SR 519 planning, 12th and Jackson Street improvements, King Street Station renovation, future Spokane Street Viaduct widening, Alaskan Way Viaduct, Monorail, and the streetcar maintenance facility/mixed-use project.

Advisors inquired about Green Streets: their purpose, existing examples, and their relationship to master planning in areas (Ballard neighborhood street master plan was noted). A key aspect is that upfront planning to decide what is desired on which streets can make it easier for private development to provide those specified improvements. Other comments touched on park-and-ride lots, and whether parking on north-south streets would soon be eliminated with bus tunnel closure (no).

ADVISORS' DISCUSSION

John Rahaim, DPD Planning Director, opened with an overview of street connections and urban design interests. Key interests include: how should we focus our efforts, improving streetscape character, making connections among neighborhoods. Primary ways that improvements can occur include: City's capital budget, major transportation projects, and through private development. A street master plan is one way to get out in front of new development and define how a street should look. John briefly indicated some of the key streets in the area, including Jackson, Dearborn, King and Main Streets, Occidental Avenue and the Colman Dock vicinity.

Reroute and extend the streetcar

The streetcar is an obvious connector. It would make sense to reroute the streetcar via Yesler and Occidental, reconnect to the existing route, and then extend it up Jackson Street. People would start relating to it as a corridor. Also, it would strengthen Occidental Avenue's character.

King Street Station vicinity (Jackson Street/Second Avenue Ext./Fourth Avenue S.)

A few advisors acknowledged this area as a nexus, confluence and entryway, but its current condition is negatively affected by numerous crossing streets, gaps at street level, and its bridge structure foundation. There is a need for improvement. It has potential to be a grand urban space, possibly with modifications to automobile traffic to improve conditions. In addition, consider a pedestrian connection on the west side of the train station to reach the North Lot vicinity.

Aesthetic benefits of improving underpasses (as with painted columns on Jackson at I-5)

The improved atmosphere created by the painted columns at Jackson and I-5 was noted as a successful connecting element. Several other advisors agreed, noting that possibility at King St./I-5, Dearborn/I-5, Royal Brougham near 4th Ave., and 4th and 5th Avenues at Yesler Way.

Pedestrian links and connectivity

Advisors expressed interest in improved pedestrian experience on several streets (see map):

- Washington Street and Main Street as connections between neighborhoods, from Sixth Avenue S. to the waterfront
- Fourth Ave. S.
- Fifth Avenue connection from Downtown to Chinatown/I.D.
- Second Avenue S., as an urban design improvement opportunity
- Royal Brougham Way
- Maynard Avenue, as a Green Street opportunity
- New streets or pathways through future North Lot development
- New pathways through possible future development south of Dearborn

- Through the mid-blocks of large blocks in Little Saigon
- Connections to Yesler Terrace vicinity
- Alaskan Way Viaduct vicinity
- First Avenue S. in the stadium vicinity
- Occidental Avenue S., extension of Green Street into the stadium vicinity

John Rahaim suggested that one way of focusing possibly limited funds for improvement would be to concentrate them near transit stations: light rail (near Royal Brougham, King Street, Yesler), King Street station vicinity, perhaps monorail stations.

Discussion about street master planning and creative design opportunities

As an introduction, John Rahaim noted that one-third of Downtown's space is in public right-of-way, and on some streets in this area there is little traffic even during rush hour. He asked, "where could we be creative in changing those streetscapes?"

During the advisor discussion, a number of advisors pointed out that certain areas are expected to receive additional development (Fourth/Fifth/Washington/Main, Little Saigon, the south-of-Dearborn vicinity). They suggested that it made sense to get out in front of development by doing street master planning that would clearly define what kind of streetscape improvements are required.

The following elaborates on some of the pedestrian links of interest listed in the section above.

- ***Second Avenue S.***, south of Second Avenue Extension: an underused street that is crying out for a better treatment (nods of agreement)
- ***S. Washington Street***, between Sixth Avenue S. and the waterfront: a connection between neighborhoods, from the existing hillside residential area and Kobe Terrace Park, through the undeveloped 4th/5th Ave. area, and westward to Pioneer Square. One advisor noted, this street needs something more than just wide sidewalks, it needs something festive to draw people to it. Also, something reflecting a slower-paced quality. John Rahaim briefly mentioned the concept of street-level residential use as one possibility (the IDR zone already contemplates residential development east of 5th Ave. S.)
- ***Fifth Avenue***. Suggestion to plan better for the connection between the Downtown government center and Chinatown/I.D. neighborhood, as part of the 4th/5th/Washington and Main vicinity
- ***Maynard Avenue S. and Main Street***, as opportunities to improve defined Green Streets, with connection and design benefits as described above by Tom Im
- ***Mid-block connections in Little Saigon***. An architect advisor noted that as part of planning for anticipated growth pressures, the City and community could anticipate and define ways to improve or preserve character. This might include mid-block connections. Planning for future conditions could benefit from a three-dimensional look at those streets and streetscapes including the "street walls" defined by existing and future development.
- ***First Avenue S. and waterfront vicinity***, along with Railroad Way, the Viaduct planning provides opportunities to improve and re-use rights-of-way with more space freed up for pedestrians. Gordon Clowers of DPD noted the often-voiced accessibility needs of Occidental Avenue businesses and residents, especially in relation to stadium events.

- ***Occidental Avenue S.*** was only briefly mentioned. Primarily, the idea of extending Green Street character south of King St. with additional improvements was mentioned by John Rahaim. While the idea of opening Occidental Ave. mall between at least Washington and Main was mentioned by one advisor, there was no group discussion about that topic.
- ***Lane Street east of I-5.*** A property owner advisor noted he was looking to improve Lane Street in some fashion from 10th to 12th Avenue S., which would provide a connection between Beacon Hill via the bridge and the lower Dearborn Street elevation.
- ***Alleys.*** Canton Alley (King to Weller between Maynard and 7th) and another alley (Jackson to Main between 7th and 8th) were mentioned as improvement possibilities that would fit in with neighborhood-generated ideas. Generally speaking, Gary Johnson noted that the City's dumpster-free program can result in better opportunities for improvement. Displacement of loading/disposal functions is an issue, though.
- ***Charles Street vicinity.*** An advisor voiced the idea of a dog park or a running pathway through that City facility, to increase flexibility for casual walking and running.

Bicycle routes and safety

- Jackson and Dearborn are two main connections for bicyclists; the City should look at increasing bicyclist comfort and safety on those streets. Also, there are not too many good options for connecting from them to Downtown. Fourth Avenue S. traffic is a safety issue for bicyclists, as is the I-5 onramp vicinity of Dearborn.
- Dearborn is part of the official Mountains-to-Sound greenway.

Other pedestrian comfort concerns

- ***Benches:*** A lack of street furniture hinders social interaction and fails to serve the elderly population in the area, and anybody that needs a rest traveling on the sloping streets.
- ***Noise:*** A noise issue from freeway traffic was also noted for the Danny Woo Gardens and elsewhere in the vicinity of I-5. Should consider methods like noise walls, or perhaps even a creative water feature with waterfalls and/or running water down Jackson from Little Saigon westward. The potential for engaging Washington State Dept. of Transportation to consider "quieter pavement" was also briefly discussed.
- ***Crosswalk safety:*** Discussion about crosswalks expressed concern from several advisors about dangerous conditions from red-light-running vehicles, and the need for additional marked sidewalks including those flashing light-marked sidewalks in high-volume areas, and non-pushbutton automatic pedestrian signals, or other methods for improved safety and visibility. Special crossing lanes and signals for bicycles were also mentioned, as seen in Europe, seeking ways to prevent bicycle-auto conflicts.

Other comments

- One advisor noted that connections across Dearborn from Chinatown should be improved if there is to be additional development south of Dearborn.
- One advisor noted that truck traffic moving from James Street I-5 offramps frequently uses Sixth Avenue S. on the steep grade to enter into the Chinatown/I.D. neighborhood, with truck volumes and noisy brakes the concerns.

Public comments

None.

Adjourn